

MASSACHUSETTS RARE AND ENDANGERED PLANTS

SANDBAR WILLOW

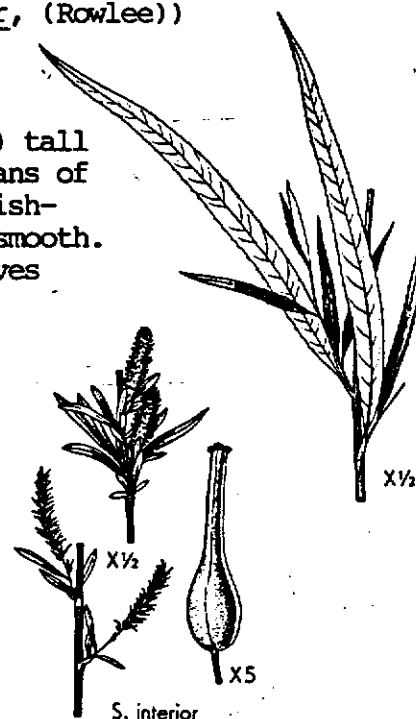
(Salix exigua, (Nutt.) formerly S. interior, (Rowlee))

DESCRIPTION

Sandbar Willow is a multi-stemmed shrub, 2-6 ft ($\frac{1}{2}$ -2 m) tall (up to 5 m elsewhere in its range) which spreads by means of underground stolens. The branchlets are slender, reddish-brown, and when young, silky-hairy, which soon become smooth. Bark of the older stems are brown to grayish. The leaves are thin, linear, 2-6 in (5-14 cm) long and $\frac{1}{2}$ in (1 cm) wide, silvery green and smooth on both sides but paler beneath, with small, blunt, well-spaced teeth along the margin. The flowers are produced in catkins that appear in April to May. The fruits are conspicuous clusters of small capsules which, as in most other willows, remains on the tree for only a short time.

SIMILAR SPECIES IN MASSACHUSETTS

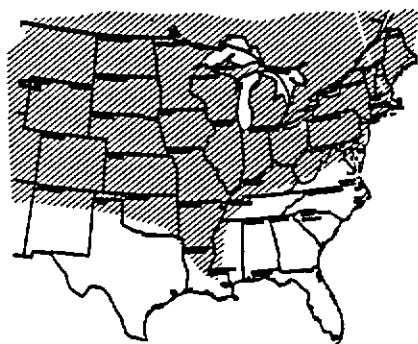
Saplings of Black Willow (Salix nigra), which is usually a medium to large tree, are often found with Sandbar Willow. The leaves of both are linear, but the Black Willow has leafy stipules encircling the twig at the base of the leaves; the Sandbar Willow has no stipules. The teeth of Black Willow leaves are sharper and more closely spaced than those of Sandbar Willow.



Gleason, M.A. The New Britton and Brown
Illustrated Flora of the Northeastern U.S.
and Adjacent Canada. New York Botanical Garden,
1932.

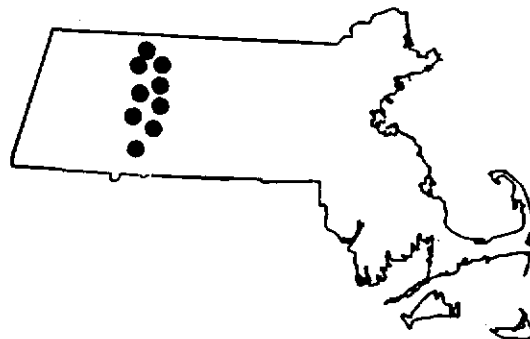
HABITAT IN MASSACHUSETTS

Sandbar Willow is found on islands, sandbars, and beaches in the flood zone



Range of Salix exigua

(continued overleaf)



● Verified since 1978

○ Reported prior to 1978

Distribution in Massachusetts by Town

of the Connecticut River. It grows on sandy, gravelly, or rocky substrates where it is subjected to annual inundation by the river. Because of the force of spring flooding, plants are usually low and sprawling, rarely more than 6 ft (2 m) tall. The branches are very pliable, and therefore resistant to being snapped by the floodwater. Commonly co-occurring species include Black Willow, Switchgrass (Panicum virgatum), Big Bluestem (Andropogon gerardi), and umbrella-sedges (Cyperus spp.)

RANGE

Sandbar Willow is distributed from eastern Quebec to Alaska, south to Virginia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and California.

POPULATION STATUS IN MASSACHUSETTS

Sandbar Willow is a species of "Special Concern" in Massachusetts. There are 9 currently verified sites (since 1978) and 2 additional historical sites recorded.

There is a scarcity of suitable habitat for Sandbar Willow in Massachusetts. Sandbar Willow occupies a very precarious position in a dynamic habitat. If the flooding increases, the plant may be washed out. If the flooding decreases, trees such as Black Willow, Eastern Cottonwood (Populus deltoides), and Sliver Maple (Acer saccharinum) may outcompete the Sandbar Willow.